MARJORIE LIU
SANA TAKEDA
MONSTRESS
image
ISSUE 17

THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

Where Maika Halfwolf goes, destruction follows. After their trip to the Isle of Bones, Zinn, the Monstrum that lives inside of Maika, devoured the crew of a Thyrian ship. This, combined with the attack on the Thyrian Blood Queens by Inquisitrixes, has put the Thyrian armed forces on high alert – and hot on Maika's trail.

After a narrow escape from Thyrian waters, Maika was offered refuge in the safe harbor city of Pontus in exchange for her promise to activate the famed city-wide Pontus Shield. When her first attempt failed, Maika and Zinn set off on a mission underground to find replacement shield parts in the Shaman-Empress's long-locked Southern Laboratory. There, they battled automata who blamed Zinn for betraying the Shaman-Empress – a betrayal he does not remember. After surviving the brief severing of their connection, defeating the automata, and retrieving the shield parts, Maika and Zinn prepared to return to the surface of Pontus, but the bodies of soldiers falling from above indicate the battle has already begun.

Meanwhile, Kippa joined a group of fox scouts whose goal is to help refugee Arcanics escape to safety should Pontus be attacked. Master Ren decided to tag along, but unbeknownst to Kippa, Ren has been ordered to bring her to his employers, whose motivations, though unknown, are almost certainly insidious.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh. In her current possession are two clues to her past: a photograph, and a fragment of a mask that many would kill to possess.

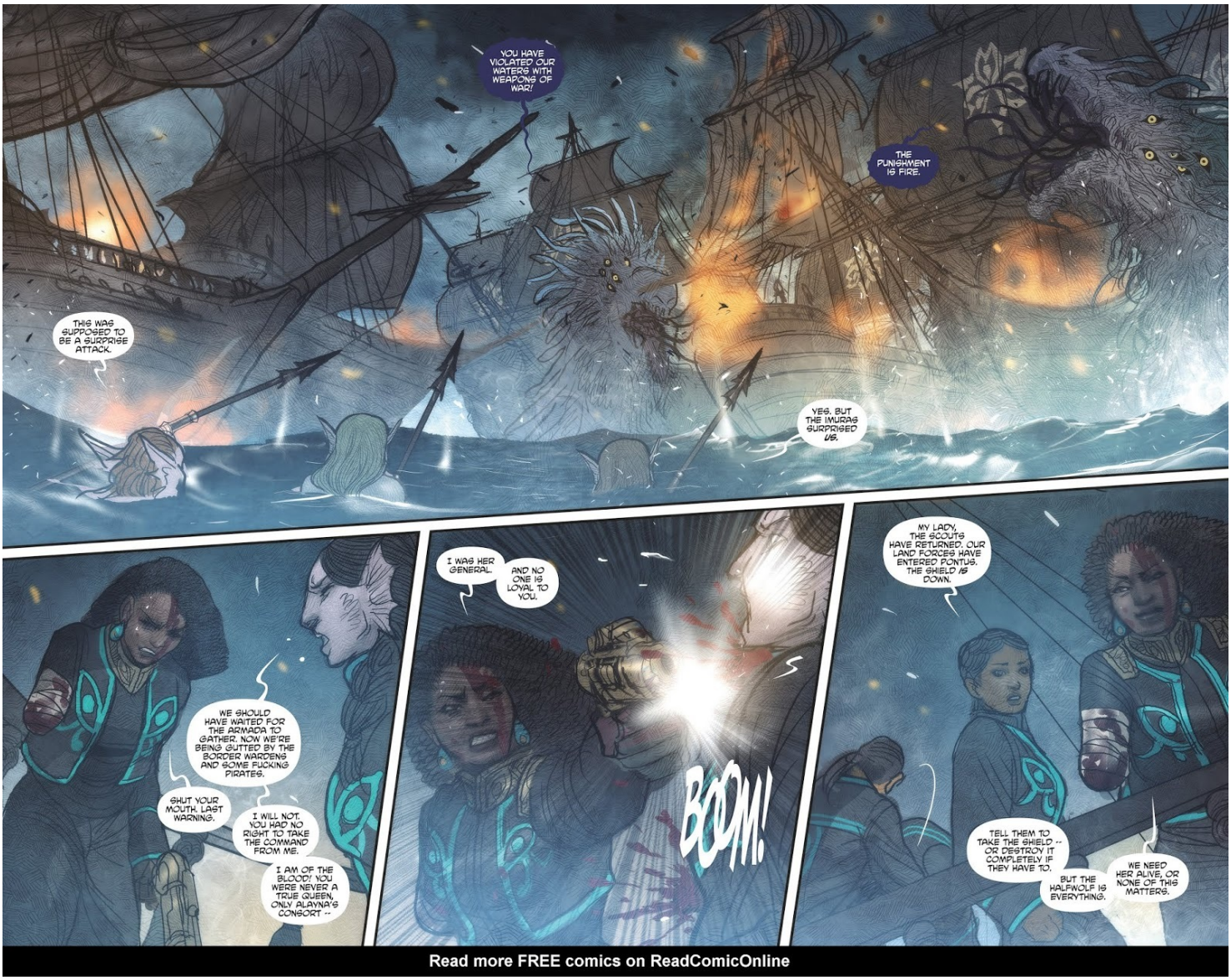
ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

SHAMAN-EMPRESS The first and most powerful Arcanic who ever lived, a sciencemaster of the highest order and Zinn's beloved. Maika is her direct descendant, and bears her Mark of the Eye.

KILL EVERYTHING.
AIYEEE!


YOU HAVE VIOLATED OUR WATERS WITH WEAPONS OF WAR!
THE PUNISHMENT IS FIRE.
THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SURPRISE ATTACK.
YES. BUT THE IMURAG SURPRISED US.
WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED FOR THE ARMADA TO GATHER. NOW WE'RE BEING GUTTED BY THE BORDER WARDENS AND SOME FUCKING PIRATES.
SHUT YOUR MOUTH. LAST WARNING.
I WILL NOT. YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO TAKE THE COMMAND FROM ME.
I AM OF THE BLOOD! YOU WERE NEVER A TRUE QUEEN, ONLY ALAYNA'S CONSORT --
I WAS HER GENERAL.
AND NO ONE IS LOYAL TO YOU.
BOOM!
MY LADY, THE SCOUTS HAVE RETURNED. OUR LAND FORCES HAVE ENTERED PONTUS. THE SHIELD IS DOWN.
TELL THEM TO TAKE THE SHIELD -- OR DESTROY IT COMPLETELY IF THEY HAVE TO.
BUT THE HALFWOLF IS EVERYTHING.
WE NEED HER ALIVE, OR NONE OF THIS MATTERS.

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GODDESS, SAVE US.
IS IT THE FEDERATION? IT HAS TO BE.
NO, GODDESS-DAMMIT. THE THYRIANS! THEY LANDED TROOPS UP THE COAST! FUCKING SCABS.
THEY MUST'VE MADE A DEAL WITH THE HUMANS.
IT'S ALL GONE TO THE WINDS, CHILD.
THOUGHT WE ONLY NEEDED TO WORRY 'BOUT THE FEDERATION, BUT NOW OUR OWN KIND GOT THE WAR POISON IN 'EM.
THIS NEEDS STITCHES, SIR.
THERE'S A HEALER UP AHEAD, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO WALK SOME DISTANCE TO HER.
WHAT'LL WE DO NOW, IF WE CAN'T TRUST OTHER ARCANICS?
RUN AHEAD WITH THESE REFUGEES, KIPPA. THERE'S LITTLE FOR YOU TO DO HERE, BUT THE HEALER WILL CERTAINLY NEED YOUR HANDS.
I'D LIKE TO STAY, MA'AM. I CAN GO DOWN INTO THE CITY AND HELP LEAD PEOPLE HERE.
NONE OF MY SCOUTS ARE GOING INTO THE CITY.
PONTUS BARELY HAS AN ARMY. THEY'LL BE OVERRUN IN HOURS.
THE REFUGEES IN THE CAMP KNOW WHERE TO GO IF THERE'S AN INVASION. THEY'LL COME HERE, TO US. OUR JOB IS TO STAY ALIVE SO WE CAN GUIDE THEM OUT.
BUT --

LEARN TO FOLLOW ORDERS, OR DON'T BOTHER BECOMING ONE OF US.
NOW GO. AND YOU, CAT -- GET LOST.
I DON'T TRUST ANYONE WHO SMELLS LIKE A DREAMTAR DEN.
SHE'S RIGHT, KIPPA. KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, JOIN THESE REFUGEES, AND FLEE WITH THEM.
GO WEST, GO ANYWHERE, BUT GET AS FAR FROM PONTUS AS YOU CAN.
YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.
NO, MASTER REN! IT'S NOT JUST THE REFUGEES WHO NEED HELP, YOU KNOW THAT. MISS MAIKA IS DOWN THERE.
THE THYRIANS ARE HERE FOR *HER*. SHE'S IN TROUBLE, TOO.
KIPPA, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND --
AIYEE!!
AHHHHHHH! GODDESS! GODDE-*URK!*

...I AM SO... CLOSE...
...I CAN HEAR... SINGING... SINGING...
FUCK ME. IT'S WEARING A PIECE OF THE MASK.
RUN FOR YOUR FUCKING *LIFE!*
YES, HAMMER.
YOU ALWAYS KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THAT BITCH.

OUR ORDERS ARE TO HOLD THIS ROOM, NO MATTER WHAT.
APPARENTLY THERE'S TREASURE DOWN THERE.
ELEVATOR COMING UP. MORE SOLDIERS, LIKELY.
THEY'LL BE IN FOR A...
...SURPRISE?
AHHH!
ARRRGH!
WHAT... WHAT *IS* THAT THING?
WAIT, IT'S THE HALFWOLF! EVERYONE --
SPLCHHCH!
NNGH.
IT SEEMS THE THYRIANS WERE MORE EAGER THAN ANY OF US ANTICIPATED.

I HOPE YOU HAD SOME SUCCESS IN THE LABORATORY, LADY HALFWOLF.
SLLSHHHPPP
NOT REALLY. BUT WE GOT THE PARTS.
WON'T MATTER, THOUGH, IF YOU CAN'T FIX THE SHIELD.
OR IF YOU CANNOT WIELD IT.
...NNNGGHHH...
...OH... WHAT A... PECULIAR... SENSATION...

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
...WE MUST HURRY... SOMETHING DIRE... APPROACHES...
THE MOTHER SUPERIOR.
IS SHE HERE?
...NO...
THE MASK FRAGMENT...
IT'S GLOWING.
...I FEAR... SOMETHING... WORSE...
THAT IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT, OH LORD OF ENDLESS SHADOWS.
THE FIRST COUNSELOR TOLD ME PONTUS HAS WEAPONS THAT CAN KILL THE OLD GODS. WHERE ARE THEY?
I DO NOT --
...MAKER OF WOE...
...YOU NEED NOT... PROTECT ME...
...HELP HER...

HOLD THE LINE... HOLD THE LINE...
AUUGH!
NNGH!
YARGHH!
DO NOT LET THE THYRIANS PASS!
GODDESS, WHAT IS THAT?
HOLY FUCK.
BOOM!

I ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT THAT WEAPON DID.
WE NEVER TRUSTED ANY OF THE BLOOD-DESCENDANTS TO TEST IT.
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY.
... I RECALL... THIS INVENTION...
... IT WAS... NOT...
... ELEGANT...
CHKK TKK
PIECE OF SHIT.
WHAM!
CHOOM
NO!
AIM FOR HIS WINGS! HIS WINGS!
GODDESS, SAVE ME!
...WE ARE... TOO... LATE...
SLASH

...I HEAR... A VOICE...
...AND A SONG...
ZINN! THE SHIELD ROOM! NOW!
IN LINE, SOLDIERS! IF YOU FALTER NOW, YOU WILL ALL DIE!
THANK THE GODDESS!
YOU BROUGHT THE SHIELD PARTS!
HERE. THIS IS WHERE WE KEEP THE GOD-KILLERS.
VIHN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU CAN'T --
I'M AFRAID WE MUST. OUR PROBLEMS ARE NOW GREATER THAN THE THYRIANS.
GET THIS CANNON OFF ME. BUT I WANT THE GLOVE. THE CLAWS ARE MADE FROM THE BONES OF AN OLD GOD.

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THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT... NO, NO...
...THESE AREN'T THE SAME AT ALL. THEY WON'T POSSIBLY FIT.
GODDESS HELP US... THEY BROUGHT BACK THE WRONG PARTS...
WHERE'S KIPPA, CORVIN?
...SISTER-BROTHER... YOU ALWAYS... HAD THE LOVELIEST... OF VOICES... ...BUT HOW... ARE YOU IN... THIS WORLD...?
YOU PROMISED.
I WASN'T ABLE TO FIND THE CHILD.
AND I COULDN'T LET THE SHIELD ROOM FALL. I'LL RESUME THE SEARCH AS SOON AS I'M ABLE.
GO NOW. BEFORE IT'S TOO --
...ZINN...
...WHAT A STRANGE THING... FINDING EACH OTHER AGAIN, IN SUCH MORTAL --
BA-
BOOM

SHRRKK
NNGH!
...YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD KILL ME WITH THE DEFILED BONES OF OUR OWN KIND?
NOT... WELCOME.
AND WITH A MERE AUTOMATON? NO TOY CAN STOP WHAT IS COMING.
SSHHHRRLLPP

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NOT... WELCOME. NOT... WELCOME.
DOOM!
...THIS... WILL NOT... WORK...
YOU WERE ALMOST KILLED BY ONE OF THESE THINGS.
...YES... BUT...
ARRGH!!
FFZZHHRRZZ
...MY SISTER-BROTHER... WAS ALWAYS MUCH STRONGER... THAN ME...

HEY, BITCH FACE.
GOT YOU.
NO, HALFWOLF.
I'VE GOT YOU.

STOP HER!
YES!!
YES... TRY TO STOP ME!
...I... MUST SLEEP...
FUCK, NO. NOT NOW.
COWARD.
YOU THINK HIDING INSIDE YOUR HOST WILL SAVE YOU?
THAT YOU WILL SIMPLY SLIDE INTO ANOTHER OF THE BLOOD WHEN SHE IS MURDERED?
I WILL TEAR YOU FROM HER BEFORE THAT CAN HAPPEN!

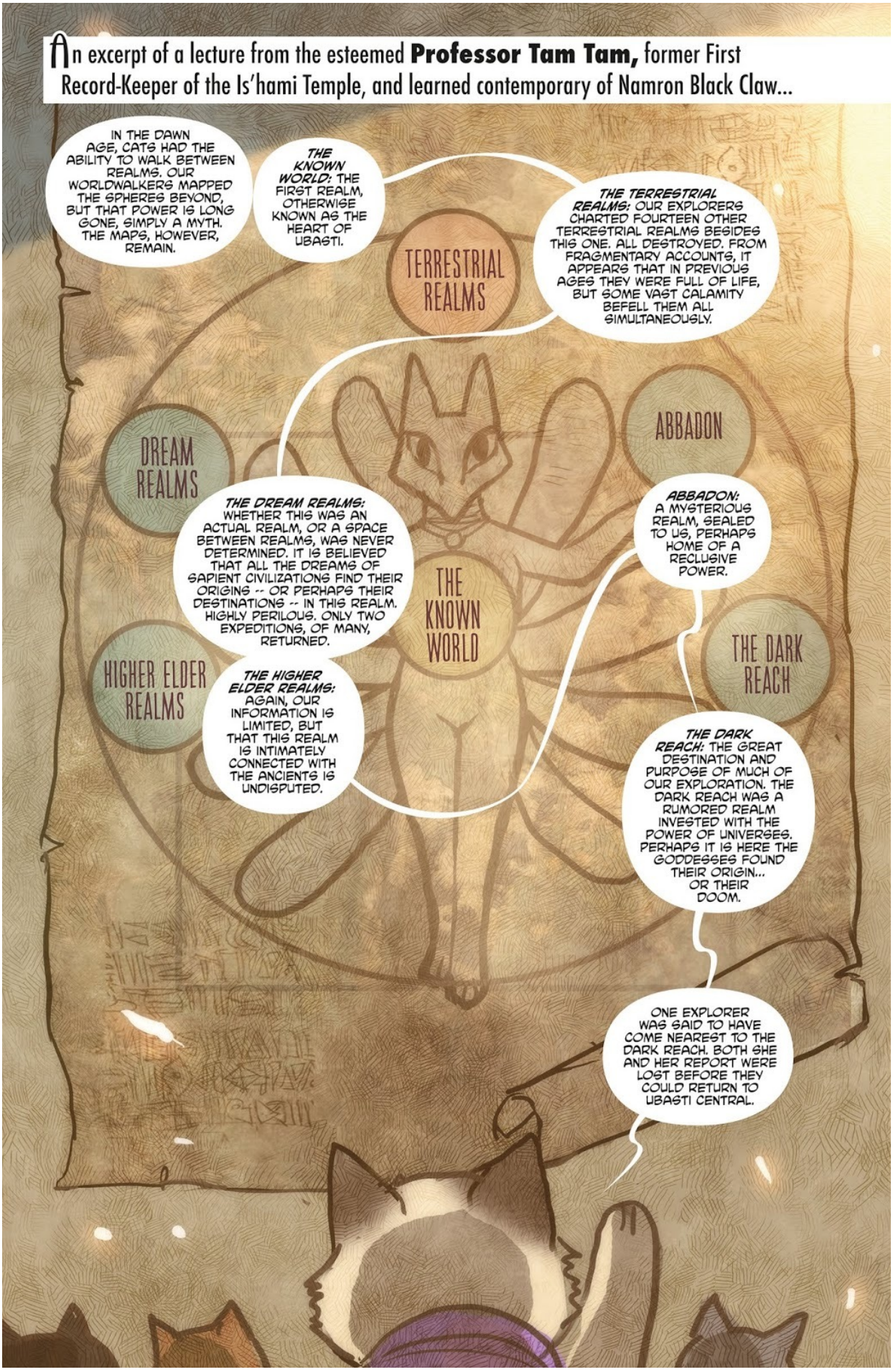
GUURRRKK!
THAT...
:GASP:
ALMOST...
HURT.
...YOU DARE... FEED... ON ME...?

I WILL NOT LET YOU STOP ME.
NOT BEFORE I FREE MY SISTER-BROTHERS!
KRAAAAAK!
BE... READY...
...YOU... FUCKER...

...SISTER-BROTHER... I NEVER HIDE...
...MINE IS THE PATH... OF DESTRUCTION...
...CHILD... THE MASK...
I'VE GOT IT.
SSLLISSHH

SHHRIPP
NASTY.
AIYEEEE!
...HALFWOLF...
...BEFORE YOU DIE... YOU HAVE MY THANKS...
...CHILD... THE GAOL...IS OPEN...

...IF YOU... BELIEVE... IN YOUR GODDESS...
...PERHAPS... YOU SHOULD BEGIN... PRAYING...
TO BE CONTINUED...


An excerpt of a lecture from the esteemed **Professor Tam Tam,** former First Record-Keeper of the Is'hami Temple, and learned contemporary of Namron Black Claw...
IN THE DAWN AGE, CATS HAD THE ABILITY TO WALK BETWEEN REALMS. OUR WORLDWALKERS MAPPED THE SPHERES BEYOND, BUT THAT POWER IS LONG GONE, SIMPLY A MYTH. THE MAPS, HOWEVER, REMAIN.
THE KNOWN WORLD: THE FIRST REALM, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE HEART OF UBASTI.
TERRESTRIAL REALMS
THE TERRESTRIAL REALMS: OUR EXPLORERS CHARTED FOURTEEN OTHER TERRESTRIAL REALMS BESIDES THIS ONE. ALL DESTROYED. FROM FRAGMENTARY ACCOUNTS, IT APPEARS THAT IN PREVIOUS AGES THEY WERE FULL OF LIFE, BUT SOME VAST CALAMITY BEFELL THEM ALL SIMULTANEOUSLY.
DREAM REALMS
THE DREAM REALMS: WHETHER THIS WAS AN ACTUAL REALM, OR A SPACE BETWEEN REALMS, WAS NEVER DETERMINED. IT IS BELIEVED THAT ALL THE DREAMS OF SAPIENT CIVILIZATIONS FIND THEIR ORIGINS -- OR PERHAPS THEIR DESTINATIONS -- IN THIS REALM. HIGHLY PERILOUS. ONLY TWO EXPEDITIONS, OF MANY, RETURNED.
HIGHER ELDER REALMS
THE HIGHER ELDER REALMS: AGAIN, OUR INFORMATION IS LIMITED, BUT THAT THIS REALM IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE ANCIENTS IS UNDISPUTED.
THE KNOWN WORLD
ABBADON
ABBADON: A MYSTERIOUS REALM, SEALED TO US, PERHAPS HOME OF A RECLUSIVE POWER.
THE DARK REACH
THE DARK REACH: THE GREAT DESTINATION AND PURPOSE OF MUCH OF OUR EXPLORATION. THE DARK REACH WAS A RUMORED REALM INVESTED WITH THE POWER OF UNIVERSES. PERHAPS IT IS HERE THE GODDESSES FOUND THEIR ORIGIN... OR THEIR DOOM.
ONE EXPLORER WAS SAID TO HAVE COME NEAREST TO THE DARK REACH. BOTH SHE AND HER REPORT WERE LOST BEFORE THEY COULD RETURN TO UBASTI CENTRAL.

FAN ART & OTHER CRAFTS

Send letters & fan art to:
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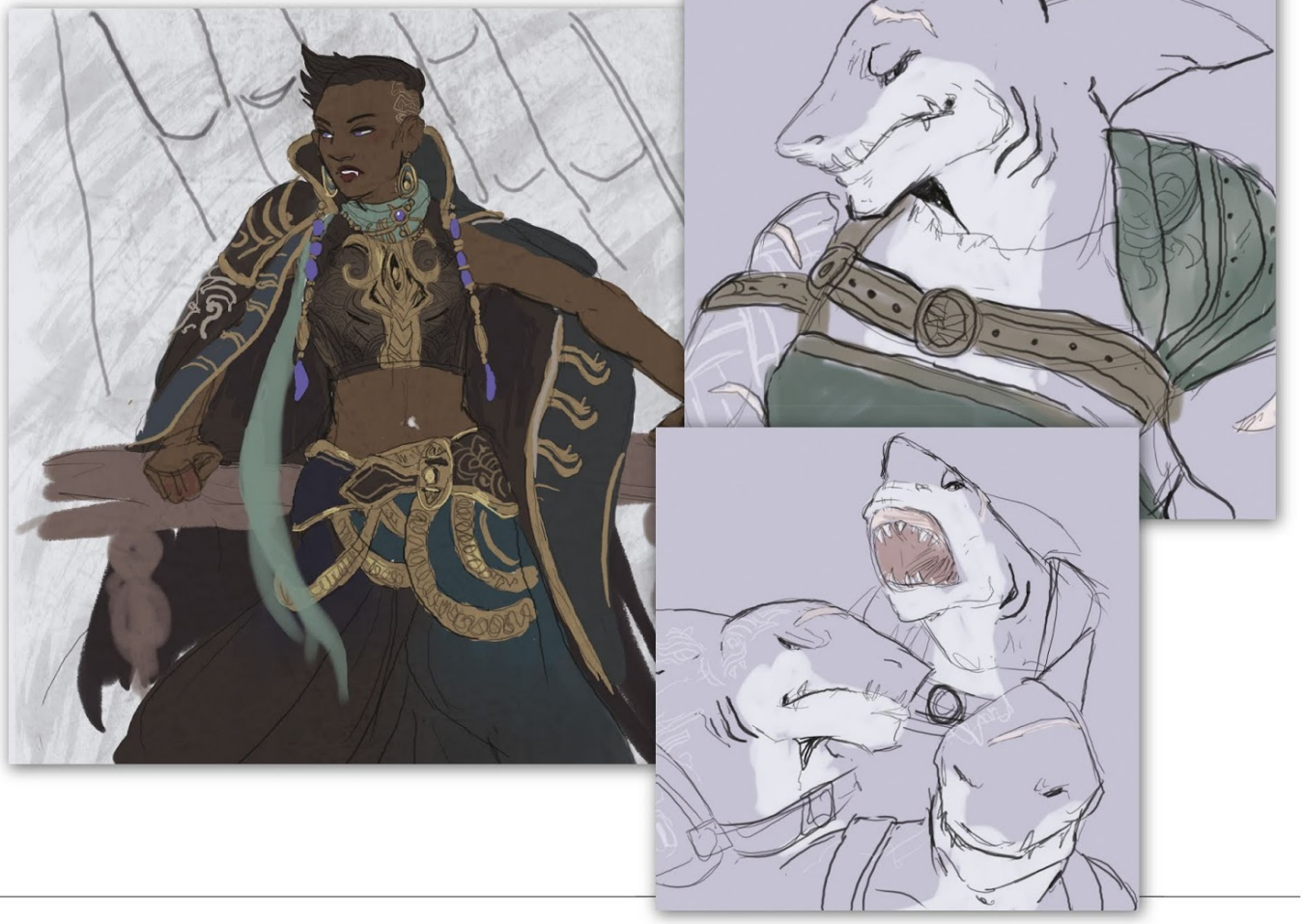


MAIKA COSPLAY

by Gillian Conahan

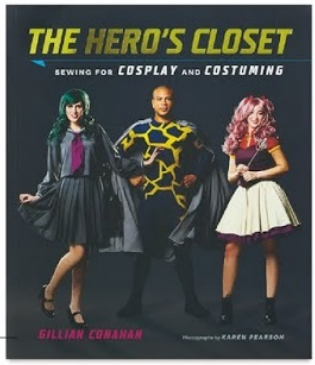
I've been wanting to make a MONSTRESS costume basically since the series started, but when I first saw the issue 13 cover last fall it all crystallized. The armor silhouette was the first thing I fell in love with, and I made a mock-up in poster board to figure out the shapes. Then I did lots of sketching and extrapolating to plan the parts of the outfit that weren't visible in the art (taking inspiration from elsewhere in the series, and from the cover's border designs for the embellishments.) By early January, I was ready to start building.

I work in my apartment living room, so non-toxic materials are a priority. For my purposes that meant building the armor from Worbla, a thermoplastic material that comes in thin sheets and becomes sculptable when heated. This was my first big armor project, and I was lucky enough to get a lot of guidance from Becka Noel, an amazing cosplayer and armor crafter who teaches classes at Manhattan Wardrobe Supply here in NYC. She helped me to work out the basic technique for this build (sandwiching poster board segments in Worbla and overlapping them to assemble), and offered other tips and suggestions along the way.

The front and back of the armor are held together with buckles at the sides and shoulders, and the right shoulder armor connects to the straps. The left shoulder piece sits right on top of the buckles, and is held on by embedded magnets. Once I'd assembled the armor I added the relief designs and the eyes, which are clear glass cabochons with the eyeballs painted on the back. I primed and applied a black base coat, then dry brushed the whole thing with metallic acrylics to get the weathered bronze effect.

For wearability, I decided to make the collar attach to a coat or vest worn underneath the armor. I made this from black brocade with a scaly design, and hand embroidered the collar with two different metallic trims. My monstrum friend is also a separate piece, built from faux fur, fiberfill-stuffed jersey tentacles, and some additional glass eyeballs with Worbla settings. It's a bit heavy and needs its own harness for support, so it's attached to a base layer worn underneath the sleeveless vest.

Thank you so much to Marjorie, Sana, and the team for creating such a rich character and world; this is now my favorite thing I've ever made and I hope I've done justice to the source.



Although this costume is mostly armor, my main expertise is in sewing and I actually wrote a sewing book for cosplayers: *The Hero's Closet,* from Abrams books. It's written to cover a little bit of everything, including spandex, faux fur, pattern alteration, and embellishment, and to provide a starting point for almost any costume project—especially for those that aren't well served by traditional sewing books.

MONSTRESS
Fan Art by RUS WOOTON

NEXT ISSUE

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MONSTRESS™ ISSUE 17

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